

REMARKS

Claims 33 and 34 remain pending in the application. Applicant amends claim 33 herein. Support for this amendment can be found at least on page 40, lines 10-12 and on page 41, lines 11-13 of the originally filed application. No new matter is added. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 33 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Owa et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,348,971) in view of Morikawa et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 7,027,169). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Notwithstanding Applicant's traverse and solely in the interest of clarification, Applicant amends claim 33.

Amended claim 33 calls for a distributed print management server that is connected to a plurality of printers through a network, divides print data into a plurality of print jobs and stores the print jobs. The distributed print management server: identifies one of the plurality of print jobs as one print job to be printed; broadcasts a print start notification to all printers; receives print job acquisition requests from idle ones of the plurality of printers; selects one printer from among the plurality of printers that have issued the print job acquisition requests, the one printer being most appropriate for the one print job based on printing capabilities and status information of the plurality of printers; and assigns the one print job to the one printer by sending print data of the one print job to the one printer and sending a print wait notification to other printers of the plurality of printers.

Owa discloses referring a print state management table (Fig. 4) existing in the PRINTDATA GENERATION SYSTEM (Fig. 7), confirming the status of the printer, and automatically selecting the output destination printer. In this configuration, however, the host computer or the PRINTDATA GENERATION SYSTEM (Fig. 2 and Fig. 7) must collect the state of printers themselves so that the network is applied with a heavy load.

In contrast, the claimed configuration comprises issuing a print state notification and electing the distributed destination printer from the idle printers among all of the printers issued the job acquisition request in response to the print start notification. This eliminates the load problem for observing the following printers. Furthermore, in Owa's configuration, a printer state management table may not be updated with the latest information in some situations. On the other hand, in the distributed print management server according to the claimed invention, such a problem does not occur.

It is a longstanding rule that to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness of a claimed invention, all of the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. *In re Royka*, 180 USPQ 143 (CCPA 1974), see MPEP §2143.03. Here, the alleged combination fails to disclose issuing a print state notification and electing the distributed destination printer from the idle printers among all of the printers issued the job acquisition request in response to the print start notification. Inasmuch as the alleged combination fails to teach or suggest all of the claim limitations, the combination cannot render claim 33 unpatentable. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Claim 34 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Owa et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,348,971) in view of Morikawa et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 7,027,169), and further in view of Fertlitsch et al. (U.S. Pub. No. 2002-0089691). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 34 depends from claim 33 and should be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons as set forth above.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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